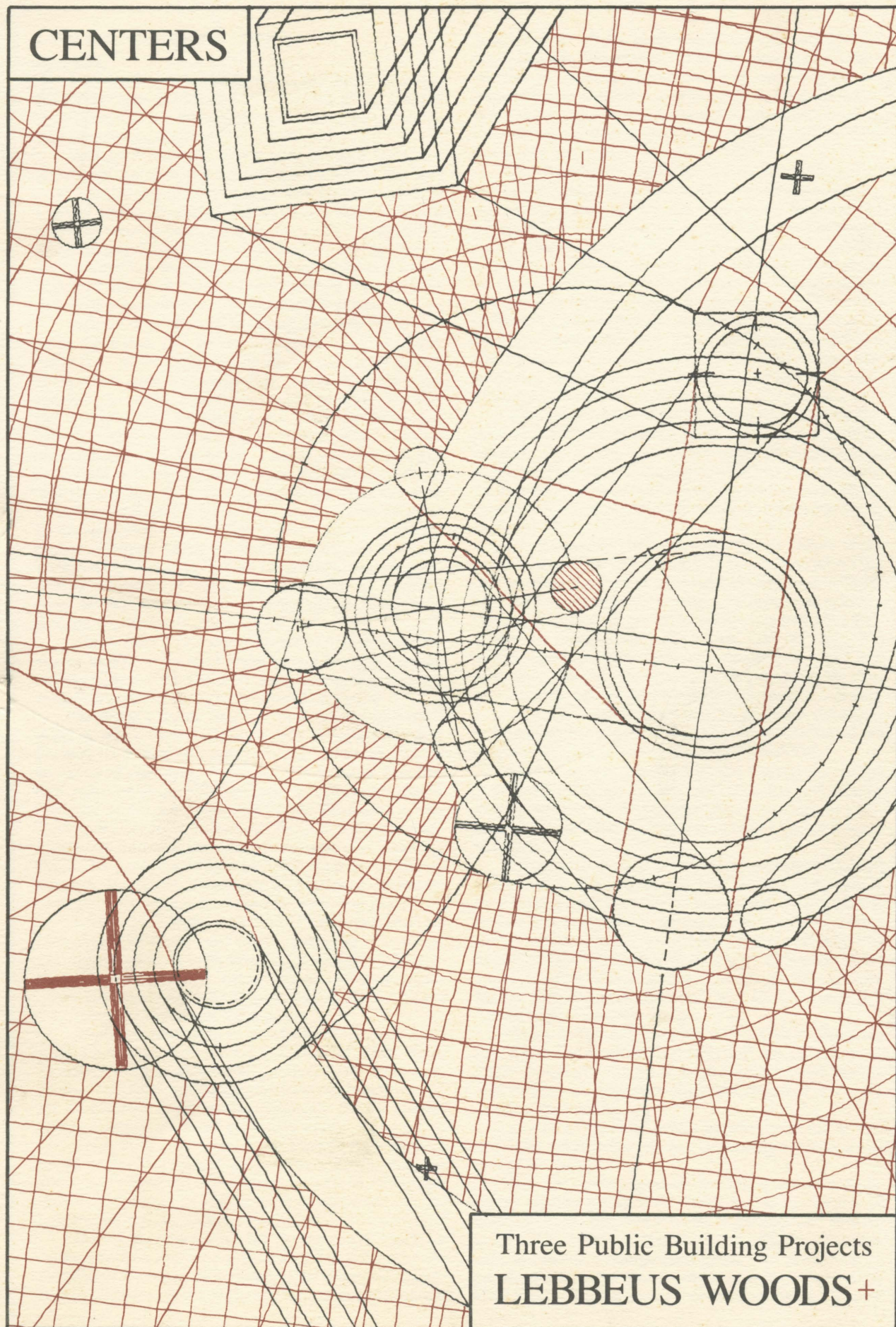


CENTERS



Three Public Building Projects
LEBBEUS WOODS+



Letter from an Unknown Woman

Dear Son,

I am writing to you instead of using the COM Relay System because this letter is for your eyes alone. It is my hope the story I am about to tell you will encourage you in your upcoming endeavors.

As I am certain you read at your terminal, the Committee on Possible Growth and the Future of the Universe, which, as you know, I chair, has just returned from a global survey. It was our aim to view firsthand, as well as record various parts of the Earth that were once called urban centers. It is the Committee's theory that by observing and studying the cities and buildings of the late Twentieth and the early Twenty-first Centuries we might be able to gain insights into our present difficulties.

Neither of us were alive during that time but the records we found and are now studying become clearer every day. At the beginning of the Twenty-first Century the fantastic growth of technology, particularly telecommunications, eliminated the necessity of urban centers. For nearly three thousand years prior to that time, societies had revolved around the idea of people centering, meaning coming together as a group or community to experience not only communication with one another but also communication with the infinite, or what was then thought of as a deity and religion, which in turn led them to the contemplation of the future. Clearly, a radical change occurred during the late Twentieth and the early Twenty-first Centuries. So the Committee requested the Archive Department to search for records of building types we felt held promise in terms of our developing program for Global Reconstruction.

The Archive Department responds as follows to the search requested by the Committee on Possible Growth and the Future of the Universe for data on public building centers concerned with exploration of the future.

We found a public building type called "museum," many of which were built during the Twentieth Century but they contained relics or "artwork" pertaining to the recent or distant past. We also found a public building type referred to as "library" wherein primarily books could be found and read, but by the beginning of the Twenty-first Century "libraries" were no longer considered necessary and the existing ones became nonfunctional. We found building types described as "places of worship," but again, these types of buildings became disused and were abandoned as public gathering places.

Towers such as those built on Manhattan Island and throughout the world were not for public use. These towers seem to have been monuments to commercial enterprises and other special interest groups, existing largely for material gain and reflecting the philosophy current at that time of "enlightened self-interest."

We found many records of buildings in the latter part of the Twentieth Century which had as a part of their name "Centers"—for example, "shopping centers"—but none of these buildings fulfilled the requirements established by the Committee, to wit: public buildings, for the people, and concerning the future of the Universe.

Thus, in the latter part of the Twentieth Century we found no buildings which were constructed for both the public and the future. We are left to conclude during that time period there was little interest in the public, the future and their relationship to each other.

During the first part of the Twenty-first Century we again found no evidence of buildings being built for the public and the future. Instead we found records that indicate a great dispersion of the population as opposed to a

centralization. At the beginning of the Twenty-first Century what was then referred to as the Catastrophe occurred. We surmise the Catastrophe was caused by the intense and unmanageable overbuilding and overcrowding of the urban centers. At a certain point, the overcrowding reached such a degree that panic resulted, followed by stampedes and riots.

The Decentralization Plan, a massive and forced movement consisting of the survivors of the Catastrophe, was initiated and carried out. The Plan organized the populace into what were called Decentralized Communication Zones. The boundaries of these Zones were determined by a grid-like telecommunications network from which the populace when once placed could neither enter nor exit. The buildings built during that period were of a technically complex nature, small in scale, and served as both home and work place. These buildings were private and existed in small clusters or "stations." Approximately ten stations were allowed per Zone and each "station's" population was not to exceed 3,000 people.

The entire operative ability of the system of the Decentralized Plan was based upon a telecommunications network which was contingent upon communications satellites. The War of 2034 during which all the communications satellites were destroyed resulted in widespread chaos from which the civilized world is still attempting to recover.

The Committee has concluded that the failure of the early Twenty-first Century and its Decentralization Plan was its total dependence upon communications satellites. Had the people used their technological advances as a supplement to person-to-person contact, as opposed to a substitute for conversation, discussion, and dialogue, the world would not have been so vulnerable to social and economic collapse. By separating the populace, the Plan precluded the opportunity for the people to come together. Consequently, it also precluded the populace from participating in the conceptualization and perception of the future which we deem so crucial to our survival.

Based on our conclusions, the Committee on the Possible Growth and Future of the Universe will soon be announcing the following program as providing the vital, initial steps to be taken in order to begin Global Reconstruction.

Large scale centers for communication must be built around the world. The centers will be open to the public on a twenty-four hour basis. Within the centers people will be able to communicate with other people on a face-to-face and person-to-person basis. The people will also be able to communicate with people in other parts of the world by direct lines of communication. Events concerning the exploration of the future will be scheduled on a regular basis within the centers.

Other building types must be built for celebrations relating to the progress and future of the human race. These buildings will also be built as public buildings but will be built on a smaller scale and designed as monuments to the people.

A final category of public building must be built in which the public takes part in a continuing conceptualization of the future.

Son, the above represents the Committee's thinking. Under separate cover, I am forwarding to you copies of drawing fragments. Many of the fragments also contain writing. The Archive Department is working on the originals. However, I thought that given your dedication to drawing, you might also be able to construct something from them. Please communicate with me in the identical

manner I have with you. I am going to sign off now, leaving as the ending of my letter the last report from the Archive Department. Love, Mother

The Archive Department responds as follows to the search requested by the Committee for the Possible Growth and the Future of the Universe for all records of plans or proposals for buildings or projects that sought as their goal public centers for the future.

We found fragments of drawings with writing on them. Currently, we are attempting to reconstruct the images. We have, however, deciphered some of the writings and the following words are clear: "CENTERS," "Communication," "future," and "Public Buildings." The drawings appear to be of buildings, somewhat spherical in form, of various scales, and all have beams of light emanating from them.

We know the drawings were made in the late Twentieth Century. However, we believe they were never built.

We can only conclude until further information is available that they were not built due to the Catastrophe, or, that they were deemed by the society of that time as unimportant, and the drawings were disregarded. . . .

Olive Brown

Olive Brown studied psychology on an undergraduate and a graduate level at Albion College and the University of Michigan. Since 1977 she has lived and worked in New York City maintaining a close association with the field of architecture.

The Center as a Paradigm of Wholeness

When I saw for the first time the drawings of Lebbeus Woods, the name of Zarathustra came to my mind. They were evoking an heroic power, beyond the technological achievements of the time, a desire to go beyond the limits, not through numbers, but through significance, a desire to transcend the human in the sense of comfortable circumstance, and to touch it into a superior hypostasis, the only one in fact valuable. An effort to honor the human condition above, in fact, the human limits. I thought, once, that the human being is unlimited in his limits. What a paradox! How is it possible to be simultaneously limited and unlimited? But this is true in the case of this fragile but thoughtful human being because, in the same way the law of gravity is the premise of flight, so the human limits are the very premise of their outrunning.

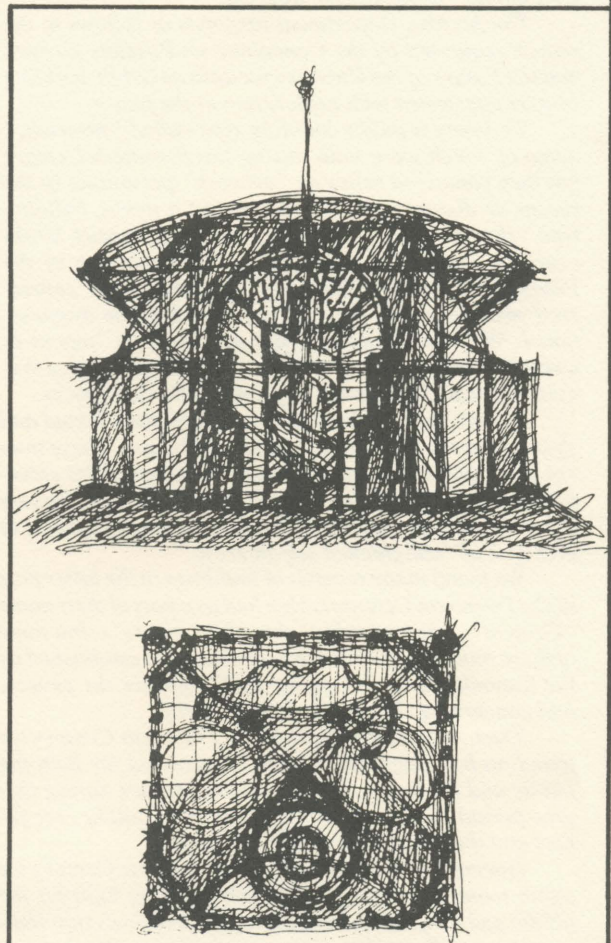
The images proposed by Lebbeus Woods languish towards a center—they want to live in the middle of the world, from where then to erupt, hungry and searching for new horizons. But new horizons need this center, in the same way a spaceship needs a launching pad. This center is in fact knowledge. Kierkegaard was right when he said that "the great problem is to save through an individual life as many human categories of a general order." It means that you have to bring together in the fatal individuality of your modern work all the times, all the circumstances, all the beings, all you feel and think, everything. But all you feel and think is so vast, so fragmental, so divergent, that without a center it might be dispelled. The center is the mysterious seed, eternal, from which grow, continuously changed, the fruits of time. The center is the last reality, that "ever-hoped-for" and "never-to-be-discovered 'one'." It is "there," where death, knowledge and rebirth are complementary forces.

Without any doubt, architecture is not only a reaction against the hardships imposed by nature. Involved in its condition is a deeper reason, which doesn't follow pragmatic determinations. Architecture is a form of knowl-

edge, and when it is sublime it is a celebration of life. Architecture, at its best, is a bet with eternity, a tenacious desire of man to last. In this impossible bet with eternity we see the magnificence of man, in his continuous effort to discover that fatidic "one," ever-hoped-for and never-to-be-discovered.

Searching for the center, Lebbeus Woods is searching for himself. *L'effet c'est moi*, he says in one of his earlier works. But searching for himself is also searching for the others. *L'effet c'est moi* could also be *l'effet c'est nous*. The center is a fundamental place where man discovers himself and doing so discovers others. It is there, in the dark solitude of the center, he might have for a moment the abyssal misgiving of the wholeness. But in order to have it, he needs an ontology, beyond aesthetics. "What to," beyond "how to." The center is a stern place, a place for essential confrontations. Its rough silence has little room for stylistic remarks. That is why Lebbeus Woods wants to propose a new attitude, more than a new style. He doesn't want to embellish our human crutch, but to transform it into a wing. He has the nostalgia of man, not as he is, but as he might be—the nostalgia for the primordial man and the primordial vitality of the ancient symmetry: man-house-cosmos. In other words, his courageous journey toward the center, as a paradigm of wholeness, is a noble aspiration towards the infinite.

Paul Klee once said that "there are two mountains: the mountain of the animals, they who don't know they don't know, and the mountain of gods, they who know they know. Between these two mountains is the crepuscular valley of men, they who know they don't know." But



they, who know they don't know, and exactly because they know they don't know, they started to paint, to draw, to write, to think, to build. *They*, who know they don't know, created in their "crepuscular valley" a wonderful culture, which is the supreme testimony of their human condition. Limited and unlimited at the same time, weak and powerful, this is *man*, the builder, this is Theseus fighting with the monster in the center of the labyrinth, this is man, searching for light through the shadows. This must be, again, the new architect, who has today, so many possibilities, and so little purpose. The purpose is the "center," there where death, knowledge and rebirth are complementary forces.

Dan Coma

Dan Coma was born in Romania and graduated from the Institutul de Arhitectura—"Ion Mincu," Bucharest. He subsequently worked as an architect in his native country, in Italy at the Studio of Paolo Portoghesi, and in the United States. He has contributed critical essays to Secolul 20, a leading European art journal. His exhibition "Architecture and Consciousness," recently appeared at Storefront. Currently, he works as a designer in New York City.

Centrality and Humanism

When I stand in good health and reach out to wherever my desires and search for wisdom lead my mind and body, I strongly feel I am a "center." Such a feeling of departure from an original state of being, hidden in what I perceive as being the gravity of my body, confirms my knowing to be a moment of physical definition—an identifiable "center"—yes, a physical point with weight, dimension, and character, timeless, and always existing as if imbedded in the space offered to our investigation by the serene quality of an untouched sheet of paper.

Up to now I feel my actions, and some of my drawings, follow this perception resulting in its direct application. This, I find, is also the point of departure of the architectural concepts developed by L. Woods.

The very essence of Architecture, although ancient, can be found in the present correlation between two "centers" that need to be defined. The one, in our human nature, the being that wonders and feels; the other, is the projection of that being into physical space which becomes the vital home for it to live and grow in beauty.

Without defining the first of these two "centers," one cannot conceive or give form to the second. By perceiving of these two "centers" as one whole, one may avoid the danger of perpetuating a modernistic attitude toward "abstraction" in Architecture. The various aspects of an architectural concept, its program, the building structure, and the nature of the spaces proposed, must be "centered" to fully support our presence in them.

Therefore, it is evident that the notion of "centrality" is one of the most recurring notions that define and give content to any research that points directly to the nature of Architecture.

A drawing, with its scale and formal objectives and the skills it involves, is the conscious appropriation made by the Architect of the notion of "place." It becomes the synthesis of many of the "centers" that we as humans seem constantly striving for in the attempt to give direction to our lives while looking forward toward the unknown.

Cities, with their many "centers" of life, hold a variety of spaces that, perceived as ideals, have once signified the success or failure of the intimate and profound depen-

dency between the original concept and its realization.

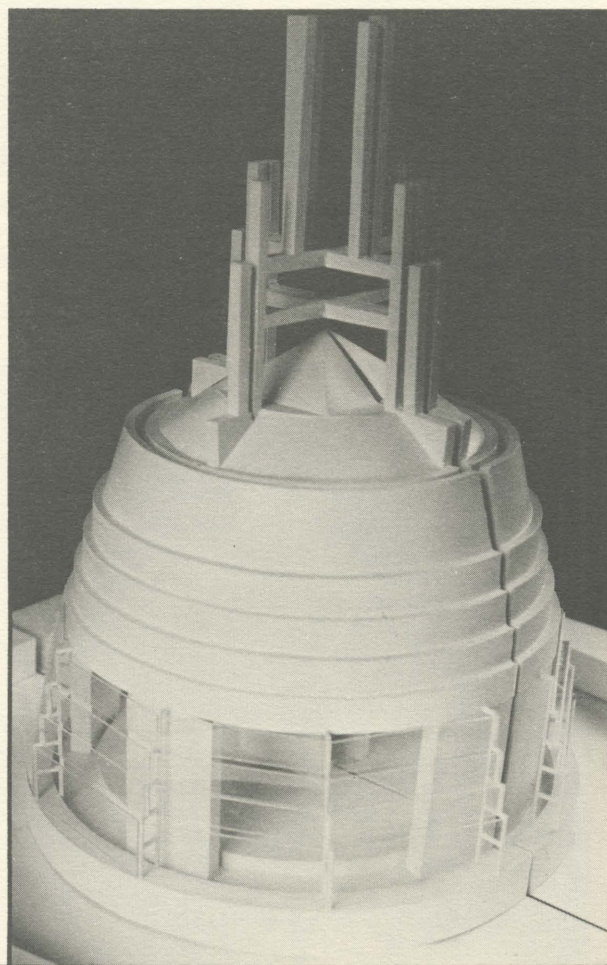
A city conceived only as a network of decentralized "centers" with various services cannot be an answer or an alternative model to the complexity of highly urbanized parts of the world. In some cities the presence of monuments, cultural and symbolic in their nature, help the city retain a soul.

Following this fundamental consideration, a modern building, or even a larger portion of the city such as a park, or the grand scheme of a new boulevard with buildings as "centers" of information, must focus on the rational and yet visionary abilities of the Master Architect.

These and other thoughts come to my mind while perceiving the world of L. Woods. The cycle of a vision is reconfirmed. It is embraced by the persistent and complex geometry of the sphere. The dimensional power of the various radii made possible by the movements the Architects' hands and the pivoting of his arms produce architectural ideas. An affirmative conviction in the function and spiritual role of the Architect seems to interpret the human condition of modern man.

Giuliano Fiorenzoli

Giuliano Fiorenzoli received graduate degrees in architecture from the University of Florence and MIT. Since 1973 he has lived and worked in New York City practicing and teaching architecture. He has participated in numerous exhibitions, lectured extensively in the United States, and is currently associate professor of design and theory at Pratt Institute and Columbia University.



project for a Tomb by Giuliano Fiorenzoli

Buildings That Tell Time

Time has been a fundamental theme in architecture since man first contemplated his place in the cosmos. In early civilizations time was intimately related to the close observation of the rhythms of the sky: the equinoctial cycle influenced the Chaldeans, the Venus cycle and the zenith passage of the sun the Maya and the midsummer solstice and lunar cycles the early Britons. The monitoring of these celestial rhythms established and maintained, amongst others, a ritual calendar which served to pinpoint a day, or days, whose cyclic and inevitable return demonstrated both the constancy and strength of the link between the sky, earth, underworld and man.

Architecture played a variety of important roles in the determination and confirmation of this link. First, there were naked-eye observatories, three dimensional instruments in stone whose design incorporated alignments which permitted astronomer/priests to observe celestial events and establish solar, lunar, planetary and stellar cycles.

A second series of structures marked a single special celestial event and incorporated it into an architecture which had a broader spiritual purpose, usually the nature of the afterlife. Such a design might include, say, an entry passage, oriented in plan and conceived in section, to allow the sun to penetrate to the innermost reaches of a burial chamber only at the winter solstice, infusing a place of death with light and warmth at a moment of celestial significance. Mircea Eliade would call this a hierophany or demonstration of the sacred.

A third and more complex type frequently combines aspects of the naked-eye observatory or the "hierophany" buildings with symbology, numerology and graphics in an attempt to use the broader language of architecture to articulate a comprehensive view of the cosmos. Located in the heart of a sacred precinct, such a building might be oriented to the cardinal or intercardinal points; its section built up of a celestially significant number of platforms and/or steps; its windows and doors aligned to important horizon events; its skin covered in whole or in part by bas-reliefs, murals or hieroglyphics describing the celestial link. It would use the play of sunlight and shadow to perform a hierophany on an important date, like the descent of a rain god to earth at the outset of the planting season. Such a hierophany would frequently be accompanied by large crowds, solemn ritual, costumes and music.

Times change and time is now, by any measure of public perception, almost totally divorced from the rhythm and cycle of the sky while architecture, save an occasional building clock, is no longer the medium of first choice of watchmakers or astronomers. Buildings that tell time, though, live on in the traditional way. Since the early '70's artists such as Nancy Holt, Charles Ross and Robert Morris have produced works which have rediscovered the ancient theme and three dimensional potential of the naked-eye observatory. Contributions from the architectural community include works (unbuilt) such as Sundial House by Stanley Saitowitz. Given their modest scale and frequently remote locations, these projects are not centers which allow large scale public participation with a "modern" aesthetic agenda, their appeal, even assuming the potential for a public scale celebration, might be limited to an "art" rather than a "popular" audience. There is, however, one 20th century work of art which is an exception to both of these observations: the New Year's Eve Timeball Drop at Times Square in New York City.

Times Square, at the hub of New York's subway sys-

tem and at the heart of the theater district is a strategically important site defined by the diagonal cut of Broadway through the grid between 42nd and 47th Sts. *The New York Times* occupied their new 25 story "skyscraper" (at the time the second tallest in Manhattan) on December 31, 1904 and celebrated the occasion with a spectacular fireworks display on the tower itself. The New Year's celebration, with the exception of the wartime dimouts, has been continuous ever since and has featured, since 1908, the dropping of a star in the form of an electric light studded timeball to signal the coming of the New Year to the always large and boisterous crowds gathered below. Though many would consider it a demonstration of the profane rather than the sacred, the New Year's Timeball Drop is, given the audience both on site at Times Square, listening on the radio and watching on television, the most widely attended, time-related hierophany ever. The deep cultural roots of the event historically, locally and nationally, its fun, celebratory and optimistic nature, its enormous scale and the fragile and deteriorated nature of its present physical context lead me to conclude that America should preserve the event. It flows from there that America should consider seriously the themes and perceptions of Lebbeus Woods' Times Tower Project.

The Times Tower, never particularly distinguished as a work of architecture, long since dwarfed by its surroundings and stripped of its news signboard can no longer compete either as a building or sign in the day-to-day hurly burly of Times Square. Its moment comes when the traffic is denied and the crowd, welling up from the subway below and spilling out from the surrounding theaters, gathers in an urban scale theater which puts on only one free performance a year and for which the Tower is both the altar and stage.

Clearly understanding this, Woods has preserved the building's existing base and profile; provided a complementary backdrop structure to the south; reinforced with bridges the base's horizontal connection with the Square; reinforced with a combination of pylons and sky-directed searchlights the vertical thrust of the tower and established an altar-stage-landing strip in a zone where the architecture dematerializes and becomes night sky. It is here, in a place between man and the gods, that the timeball will descend as it has now for 80 years, ritually enacting for all to see the return of our star, linking us to our past, preparing us for the millennium (and hopefully the event depicted in Woods' spectacular drawing) and confirming as only monumental theater can, our place in time and space.

Davidson Norris

Davidson Norris, a graduate of the Yale School of Architecture, has focused his theoretical and design research on the relationship between the built forms, the sky and a culture's perception of them. His most recent papers on the subject are Ethnoastronomy in Modern Art and Architecture (co-author), presented at the Smithsonian Institution, and Archaeoastronomy: the Architecture of the Naked-eye Observatory, presented at the Cooper-Hewitt Museum. His most recent built project is a Technology Center for the Republic of Botswana.

Times Tower

It is night in the magic city, the last night of the month, the year, the millennium. the old Times Tower has been transformed and, with it, Times Square. As a million celebrants of the new millennium crowd the Square, the

Tower marks with light and clamorous sound the final moment of death and transfiguration. Memories flood a million thoughts: of old friends and foes, of drama and dance and song upon neglected stages, and of the laughter of children. From deep starfields above the Tower, a millennial ship descends. Dreams of the new age inflame a million hearts. Once in a thousand years the city lives its end and its beginning. The ship returns from four regions of earth and time, bringing closer the moment of grace. A million voices rise in expectation. . . .

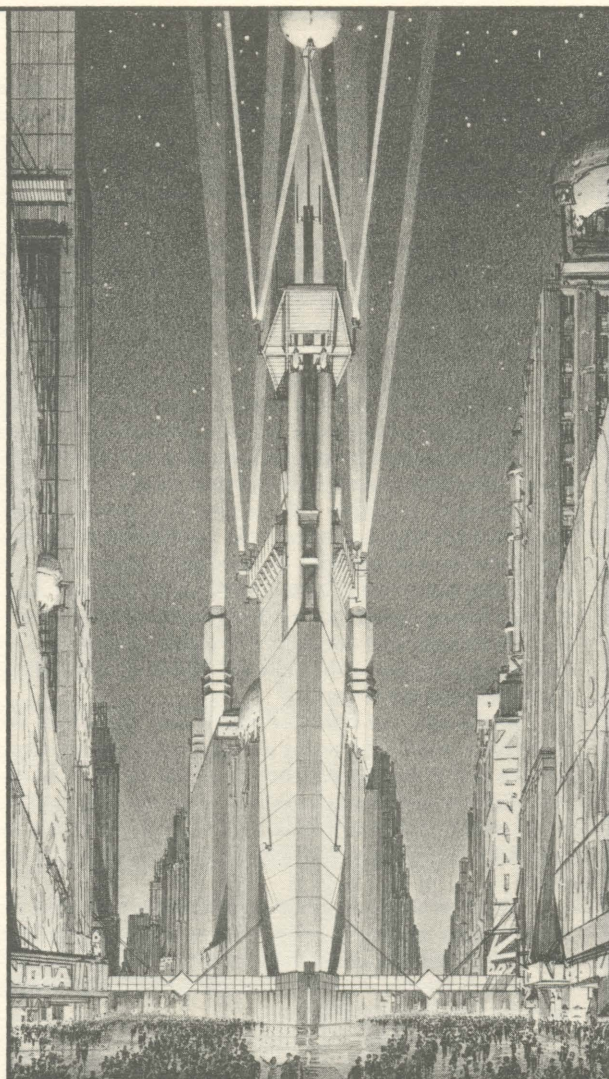
It is not for the sake of custom alone that people celebrate the passing of years, decades and historical epochs, nor is it accidental that in the Times Square celebration a sphere plays so central a role on New Year's Eve. The very calendars that mark significant periods of time are synchronized with planetary changes and stellar movements that are part of cyclical processes. In Times Square, on the eve of the passing year and the early morning of the coming one, people consciously join for a while in the dynamic evolution of events on a scale exceeding the bounds set by even the most advanced science and art.

Nor is it coincidental that a tower is at the center of so momentous a celebration. The tower defines a precise point in time and space and an axis that begins at the center of Earth and extends to the far reaches of the Universe. This has always been a sacred axis, and the point on the plane of Earth occupied by the tower is a place consecrated by the intersection of the finite plane and the axis of the infinite. Obelisks, bell towers, lighthouses, observatories and astrolabes, Francis Bacon's towers "a half mile in height . . . and upon them in some places are the dwellings of hermits whom we visit sometimes and instruct what to observe,"¹ Jung's Bollingen Tower, and the tower at Thoor Ballylee where Yeats counted the incarnate phases of the moon—these commemorate places and events of profound and sometimes terrifying significance.²

On the night of December 31, 1999, the attention of millions of people will focus on a new Times Tower and celebrate in a Dionysian ritual of catharsis and intoxication the passing of one thousand years of human history, a great epoch that has seen the signing of the Magna Carta, the building of Chartres Cathedral, the sculpting of the giant David, the discovery of the law of universal gravitation, the writing of the Constitution of the United States, the industrial revolution, the dropping of atomic bombs on Japan, the landing of men on the surface of the Moon, and a mighty stream of human lives that have passed for the most part uncommemorated and unknown. In that deep night the old will give way to the new—the dead will be replaced by the newborn and the living. From out of the vast *corpus* of time a new millennium will come into existence, a new epoch of one thousand years into which the hopes and fears of mankind are already being invested. Of what events, great and small, will its history one day be written, and in another, distant hour of transformation, pass with solemn celebration? Of what wars, ideas, journeys and discoveries will its memories be made?

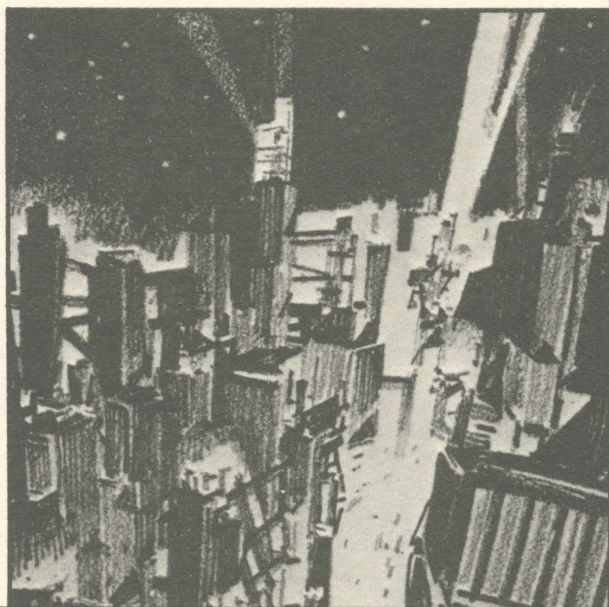
On that night only sixteen years from today, a ball will be lowered once more on the *axis mundi* of the Times Tower, at the very "crossroads of the world." A golden, spherical vessel will descend from the night sky, traced by beams of light as it nears the landing platform at the crest of the Tower. From where will it have come? Who, or what—if anything at all—will it bring to emerge finally into the human presence?

Lebbeus Woods



¹ Francis Bacon, *New Atlantis*, p. 211, Great Books Series, Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1952.

² Only in the present day, or in past ages of inferior poetry, has the tower been severed from its true, archetypal meanings, becoming a highly styled container, valued primarily because it is economical in its use of scarce urban land.



Times Tower (details)

Epicyclarium

After a century of intense work in relatively narrow fields of research, a quest is at present underway for what might be called the Holy Grail of science, art and the humanities: a synthesis of the entire field of knowledge into a comprehensive and universal understanding of the world.

In contemporary physics, a unified field theory is being formulated¹ from recent discoveries about the gravitational, electromagnetic and nuclear forces controlling both matter and energy. A corresponding revival of interest in cosmology has already provided new insights concerning the origin and destiny of the universe. The development of so broad and basic a view of the physical world will have, in years to come, a substantial effect on the goals and values of an emerging planetary culture. Indeed, following quantum mechanical theories with their revolutionary principle of uncertainty, contemporary thinkers have begun to reform the intellectual constructs that provide culture with a consistent framework for evaluating the world. The last vestiges of classical Aristotelian logical apparatus are being replaced by new systems of thought that emphasize dynamic continuity over analytical precision as the principal means of establishing a coherent ground of reality.²

In the arts, the first stirrings of new harmonies are manifest in works that assert the continuity of experience and the active interdependence of all the elements of nature. Collage and the discontinuity of the absurd are today being challenged by new ideas and forms of expression inspired by the relationships between Man, earth and the stars.

The Epicyclarium is a project that brings together the new physics and cosmology, the new philosophies of dynamic continuity and both imagistic art and an architecture that expresses a spirit of harmony and the new unity of form, idea and experience.

A composition of simple forms and spaces, the Epicyclarium houses the instruments of an advanced electronics technology and the staff of creative scientists necessary to gather a vast and diverse body of knowledge and instill it into the two-dimensional expression known as a global image. Flashing in the interior darkness across a thirty foot disc suspended above the floor of the Epicyclarium building, this image evolves continuously as fresh data is gathered and fed to computers programmed to synthesize it into ever-changing configurations of light and color. Simultaneously it is transmitted via microwave and satellite to receivers around the world, a state-of-the-planet projection that serves a variety of cultural purposes.

Until the completion of the Epicyclarium and the beginning of its operations, it is possible only to speculate about the precise nature and form of the global image it will serve to create. While historical precedents exist in various mythological symbol systems, the breadth and depth of contemporary knowledge of which the global image will be composed is unprecedented, and it is expected that forms of an entirely new order of subtlety and content will be achieved. Conceivably the production of a contemporary global image will only confirm ancient conceptions of the world. Archetypes known to previous civilizations may emerge, or—if the image is pictorial and narrative, as some observers believe it will be—the image may be of landscapes and figures linked by either new or existing mythological schemes. The religiously-minded anticipate a holistic projection amounting to “the many faces of God.”

It is most likely, however, that the electronically stimulated image plate will produce an abstract kaleidoscope of immense complexity, a cybernetic expression of the myriad forces of change that move invisibly within the events comprising time and space. Though some critics maintain that no coherent image at all can result from “machines,” but only visual chaos punctuated at random moments by some form of coincidental order, advocates of the Epicyclarium and its global image respond that considering recent scientific inquiry into chaotic phenomena, with their “strange attractors” and patterns of “emergent order,” this result in itself would provide a valuable new object of study leading eventually to a more comprehensive understanding of the world.

Presently in the developmental stage, this project will employ telecommunications and computer theories and technology anticipated along the lines of current research. Microchip design and manufacture, for example, will soon allow extreme miniaturization of the cells forming the image plate, creating a telescoping matrix of cells within cells that will result in a continuous image of great visual subtlety.

The building itself is divided into the Lower Chamber, a space for general and close observation of the image plate from below, and the Upper Chamber, serving as a theater for procedures related to the evolution of the image. A sub-chamber in the base of the building contains equipment, workshop and laboratory spaces.

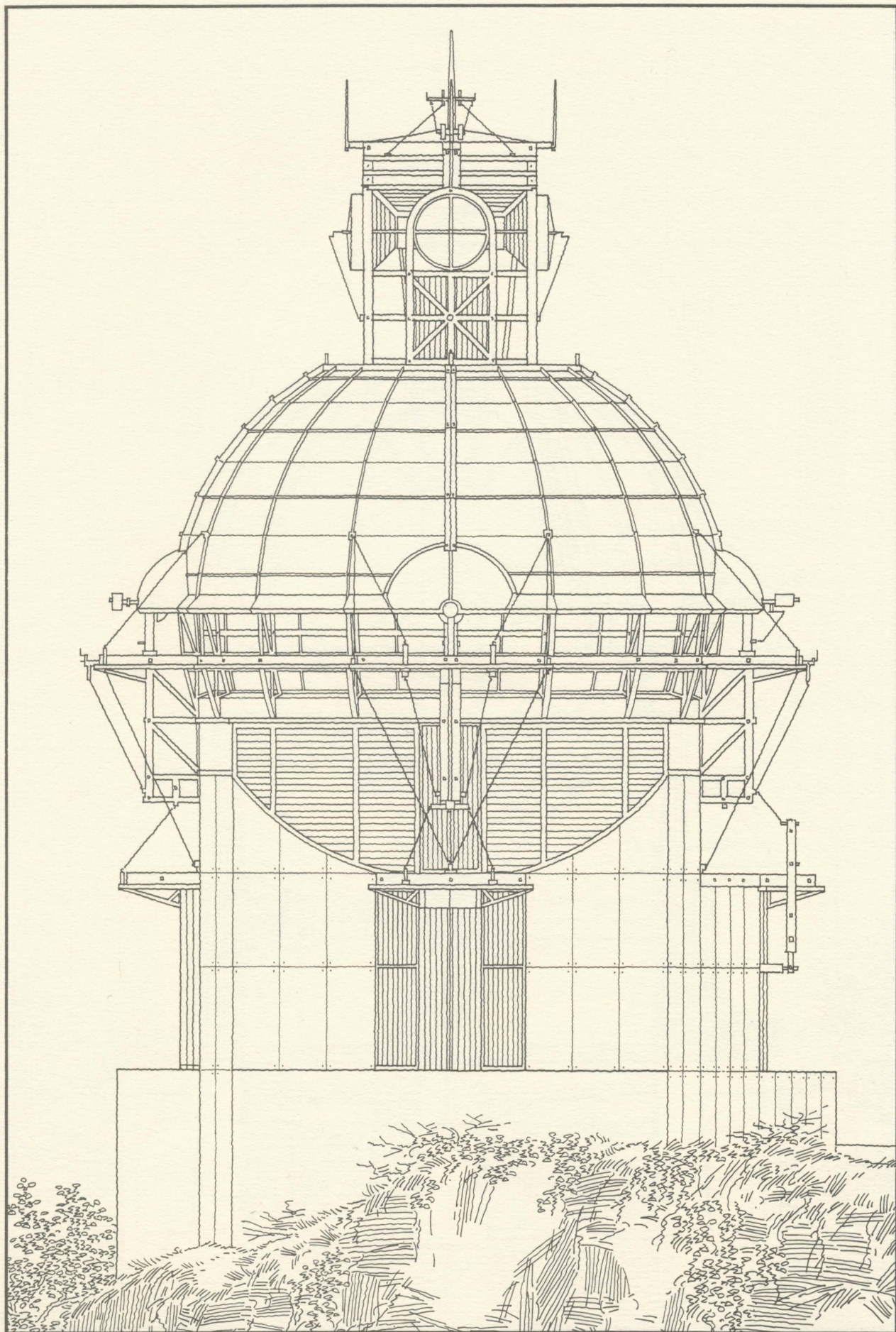
Architectural forms and materials most appropriate to the spirit and function of the Epicyclarium have been used with a directness that intentionally stands in contrast to the arcane complexity of the instruments and their functions. Centralized forms effectively enclose the image plate itself, the required interior spaces and equipment and are symbolic of the intense focus of energy and knowledge that will occur at this particular point in time and space. The intersection of sphere and cube at the level of the image plate recalls the relationship between separate realms of sky and earth, the immaterial and the material, the visible and invisible and their mutual source in the seamless fabric of nature. The metals and concrete of which they are constructed derive from the earth, but are here reconstituted in their four-square and continuously symmetrical forms to at once stand firmly on the earth and to reflect the golden radiance of the Sun, Earth's source of life. The whole composition recalls at the same time the older forms of temple, theater, experimental laboratory and observatory, and yet states their coalescence in a new activity that can properly be called *planetary science*.

As the inventor and designer of the Epicyclarium, I anticipate collaboration with a team of scientists, artists and technicians with the goal of making this project a center of human knowledge and creative capacity that takes an active place in the growing, enthusiastic effort to correlate and unify diverse fields of study and work.

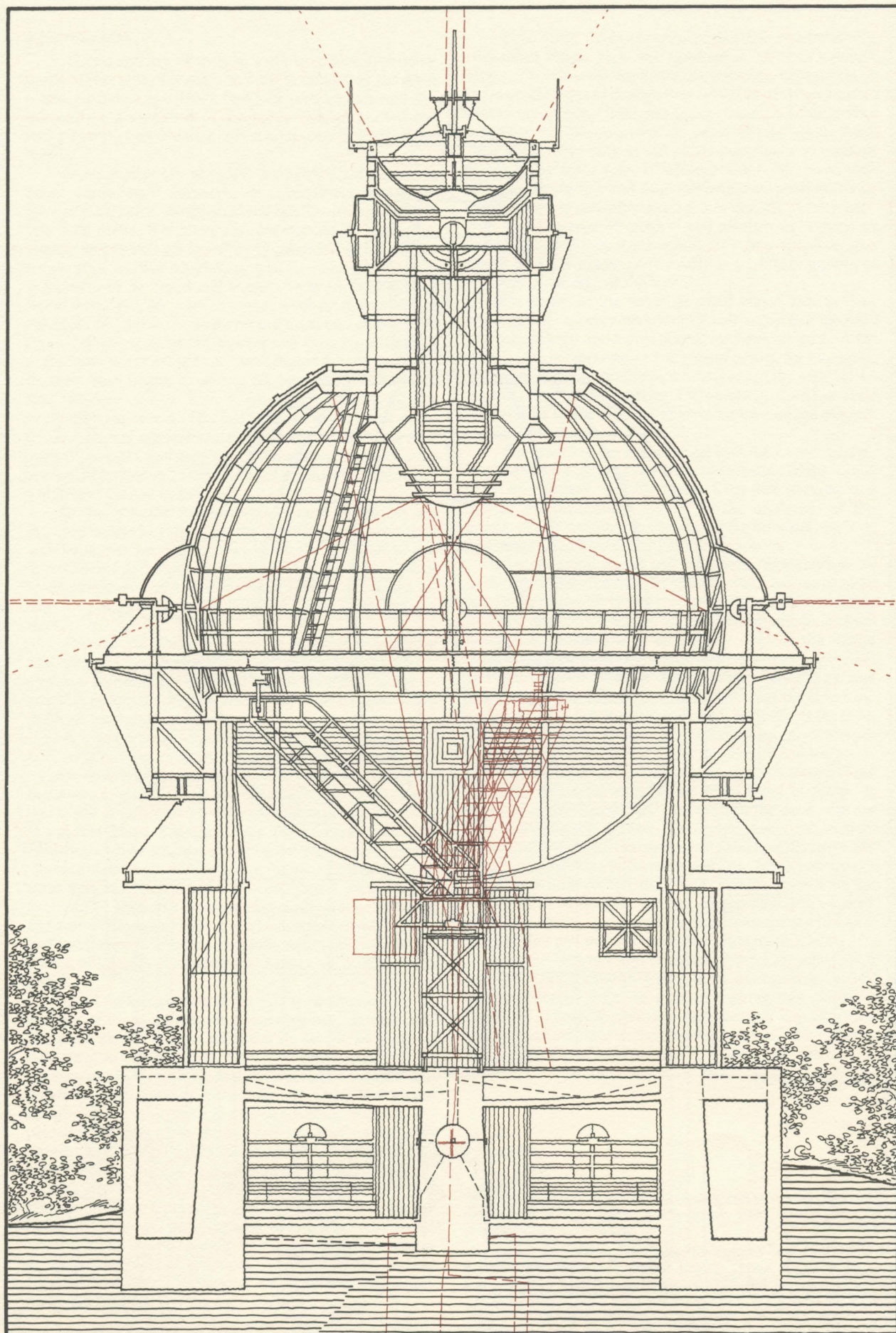
Lebbeus Woods

¹By Stephen Hawking and others. See Hawking's essay, *The Unification of Physics*, Great Books Today, 1984, Encyclopaedia Britannica.

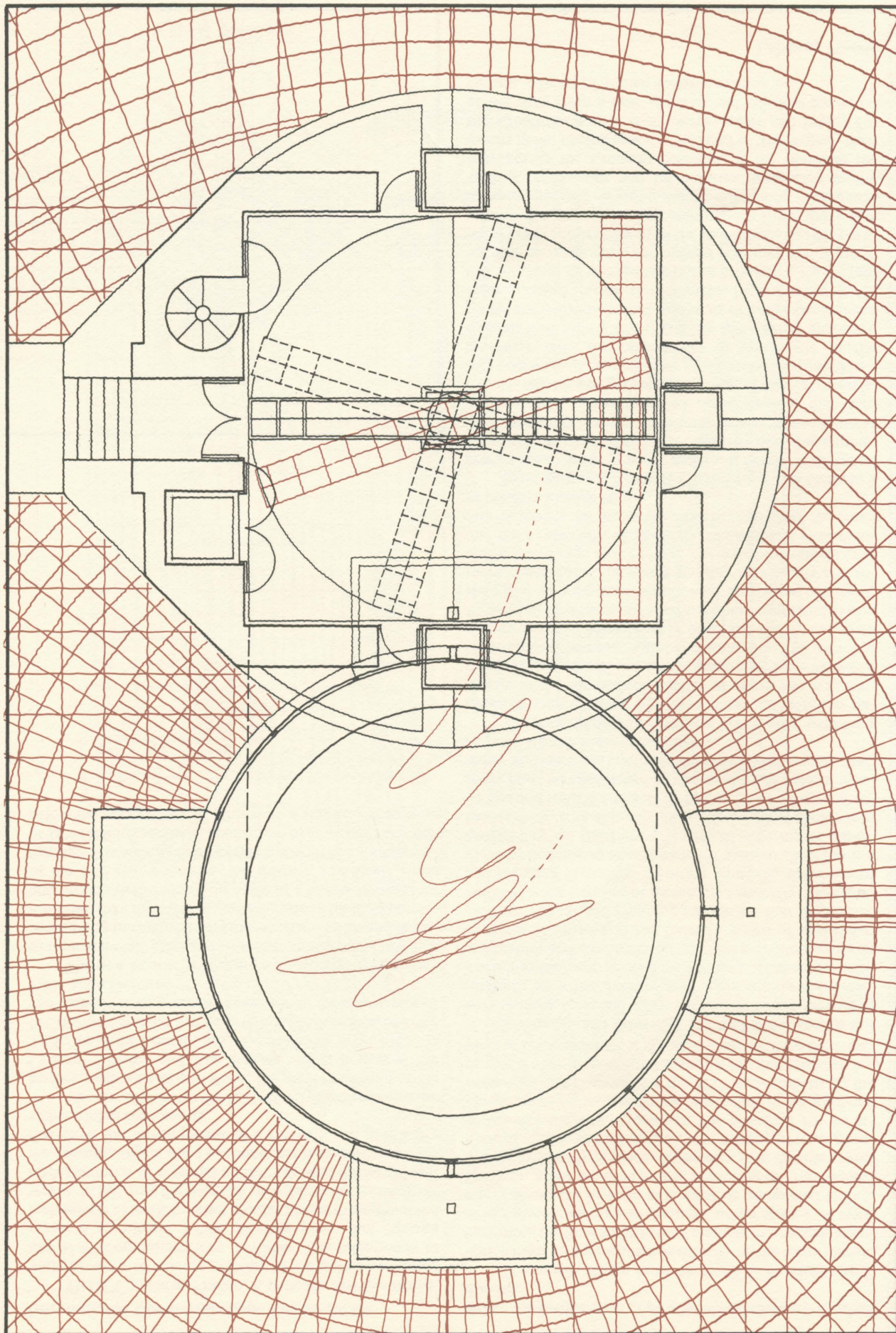
²Significant examples are Sigmund Freud's *An Outline of Psychoanalysis*, First American Edition, 1964, W.W. Norton and Company, and George Melhuish's *The Paradoxical Nature of Reality*.



Epicyclarium Elevation



Epicyclarium Section



International Communications Center (ICC)

The ICC in Paris, France, is to be the first in a world-wide network of centers offering to the public unlimited use of telecommunications facilities. The intention is to create a significant public meeting place that through technology extends to other similar places throughout the world. In this way the program recognizes the growing interdependence of regional cultures around the world and the present, urgent need to counteract nationalistic trends that slow the development of a thriving and politically stable global community.

The site chosen for the ICC effectively terminates the historic east-west axis of Paris, the great boulevard of the Champs Élysées and Rue Royale which begins at the Tuileries of the Louvre, passes the Obelisk in the Place de la Concorde and the Arc de Triomphe to Tete Defense, the site named for its prominent position in the new sector of Paris at La Defense.

The new buildings here are a disorderly arrangement of typical metal, glass and concrete commercial buildings resembling new American cities such as Dallas and Houston more than the older sectors of Paris, with their precise and orderly definition of the scale of a human being afoot in the city. Nevertheless, the historic axis itself slices through this *mélange* and exerts a powerful influence felt at Tete Defense, a visual connection to civilized Paris that offers the opportunity to achieve in a single architectural

stroke the justification of an otherwise indefensible urban district.

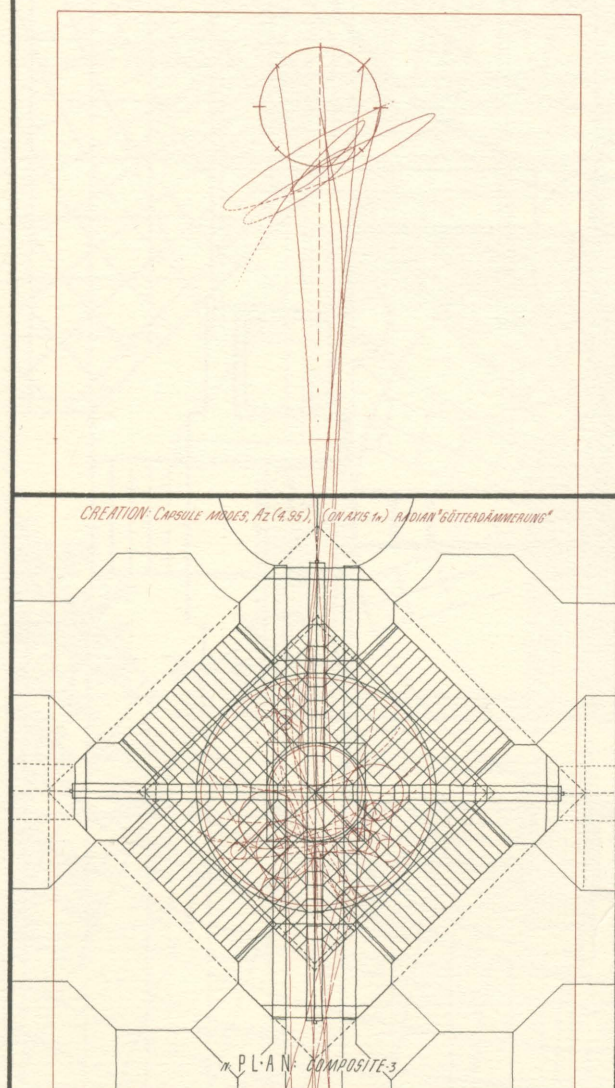
The single stroke is to be the ICC building itself, which must occupy a position directly on the historic axis, becoming the final architectural element in a succession of existing monuments and dynamic urban spaces. A symmetry about the historic axis must be completed at Tete Defense, amid the thoughtless scattering of "functional" buildings already in place. Symmetry is in this case symbolic of a noble subordination of the urban part to its greater whole—the city. Moreover, the necessity for an architecture of centralized forms responding to the spirit and content of the program for the ICC leads directly to the proposal of an architectural *tour de force* that establishes a precise and unequivocal physical center at Tete Defense.

Symmetry and centrality are traditional modes not only shaping form and space but also of action serving to establish an urban hierarchy of architecture and ritual. Their replacement in modern life and architecture with asymmetry and the decentralization of activities across an anonymous urban grid has been the result of egalitarian political, social and planning tendencies that emphasize equality at the expense of hierarchy. Ironically, the visual and semiotic confusion resulting from the influence of these tendencies on the character of modern cities has not liberated urban dwellers. Clearly, an ordering of public spaces must be restored to cities if freedom of choice is to be rescued from confusion. A hierarchy of space and activity must be established by the creation of axes of symmetry and once again of actual architectural centers that, at Tete Defense seem so inevitable.

The resuscitation of historical typologies, with their establishment of static figures of state and religious authority at the hierarchical center of urban life will not, however, serve well the new requirement for both urban hierarchy and a sense of global community. The center of culture is today appropriately occupied not by authority figures but by a large and mobile public comprised of distinct and striving individuals who are better educated, more conscious of the world and more politically and socially active than ever before. The new hierarchical centers must establish, accordingly, the absolute whose authority directs the life of the modern individual: the force of creative change itself.

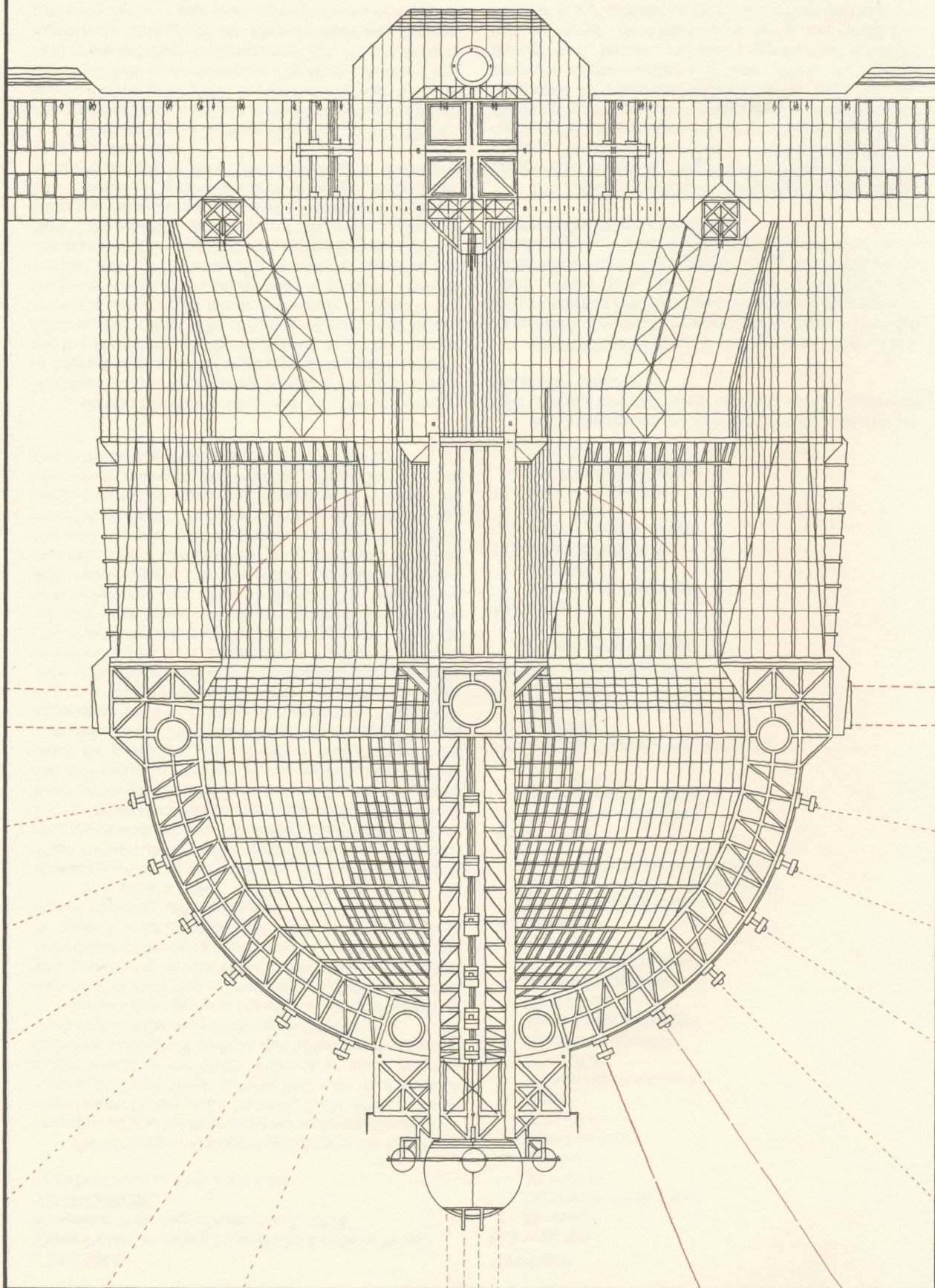
In my proposal for the ICC building at Tete Defense a central space some seventy meters in height is designed for events in which individual creativity may find expression. Meetings, games, traditional theatrical and musical performances, ceremonies to commemorate historical events, rallies, and gatherings at times of special community concern—these and other group activities provide individuals with the opportunity to participate in the dynamics of public life. Flanking this central space are rooms for individual study and work of both a general and specialized character. For example, there are rooms for the watching of foreign television programs, for private tutoring in languages, and special seminars and projects of all kinds for the benefit of the individual, and the community. Suspended in the central space from above is a complex capsule, a sub-building containing production studios, workshops and laboratories designated in the program as the Creation function. If the platform for events in the central space is the heart of this project, then the Creation capsule is its nerve center and brain. Together they form a new physical and spiritual center of culture, a locus of human creative evolution.

Lebbeus Woods



[5n] COMMUNITAS N. OBLIGATUM

UNIVERSUM: NON DOMINUS (75%)



CENTERS:

Three Public Building Projects by Lebbeus Woods
November 8 through December 2, 1984

STOREFRONT

51 Prince Street, New York City

The drawings and model that comprise the exhibition illustrate designs for three projects: an International Communications Center at La Defense, Paris, France; a conversion of Times Tower in New York City in celebration of the advent of the Third Millennium; and a building called by Lebbeus Woods an *Epicyclarium*, designed to produce a continuously evolving global image.

Each of these projects concerns a center of human interest and activity and is composed of centralized forms and spaces. It is an aim of the exhibition to focus public and critical attention on the concept of centrality as it may be applied to architecture and exists today in the daily rounds of public and private life.

"The present age," Lebbeus Woods writes, "is characterized not by a seminal *one*, but a pluralistic *many*. Mass culture, mass media, mass production, and mass consumption have all served to reduce individual being to a state fragmentary and incomplete in itself. Even though mass culture glorifies the eccentric and the rare, integrated and self-sustaining beings 'at *one* with themselves' are today the exception. This, however, will change as the consciousness of individuals increases through access to knowledge and a wide range of experiences. Then a culture may arise in which the *many* is no longer a vague mass of indistinct ciphers, but a free and healthy assembly of self-sufficient *ones*. In the name of this new culture a city of many centers may be founded, opposing the urban grids of today whose ubiquitous interstices can never be centers because they exert no hierarchical influence on their surroundings. The conceptual construct of an ideal humanist city of that day may well be that of a matrix of true and powerful centers, autonomous spheres of influence joined in the complex geometry of Relativity and cyclic patterns of a universal evolution. It is toward the conception, planning and building of this ideal city that this exhibition of work and thought is dedicated."

Lebbeus Woods was born May 31, 1940 in Lansing, Michigan, USA. He attended Purdue University School of Engineering receiving academic honors before attending the University of Illinois School of Architecture at Champaign-Urbana. The recipient of numerous design awards as a student, he left the University in 1964 to work for Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo and Associates. There he worked until 1967 on the design and development and construction of the Ford Foundation Headquarters in New York City. In 1974, as director of design for a small architecture firm in Illinois, he won a Progressive Architecture Citation for applied research in design. Since 1976, he has lived in New York City, continuing his theoretical studies and research.

His last exhibition in New York City, *AEON: The Architecture of Time*, was held at the Express/Network Gallery in the spring of 1982. In April of this year, his most recent exhibition, *Architecture: The Mythic Journey*, was held at the Indianapolis Museum of Art. He has lectured extensively throughout the United States and Europe. Currently, he is a visiting associate professor of design at Pratt Institute. His most recent article on his work, *Architecture, Consciousness and the Mythos of Time*, appears in the current issue of *AA Files*, Number 7, the Architectural Association quarterly.

Catalogue

Epicyclarium

1. Elevation
ink and pencil on paper
30 × 20 in.
2. Section
pencil on paper
30 × 20 in.
3. Plans
ink and pencil on paper
30 × 20 in.
4. Exterior Perspective
ink and pencil on paper
30 × 20 in.
5. Interior Perspective
ink and pencil on paper
30 × 20 in.
6. Model
metal, wood and plaster
25 × 14 × 14 in. (excluding base)
model made by Richelmo Bottino

Times Tower

7. Perspectives and Plans
ink and pencil on board
40 × 30 in.

International Communications Center

8. Elevation
ink and pencil on paper
30 × 30 in.
9. Site and Building Plans
ink and pencil on paper
30 × 60 in.
10. Section
ink and pencil on paper
30 × 30 in.
11. Exterior Perspective
ink and pencil on paper
30 × 30 in.
12. Interior Perspective
ink and pencil on paper
30 × 30 in.

All drawings are by Lebbeus Woods. Dimensions refer to sheet size and height precedes width. Exhibition assisted by Mark Jewett.

STOREFRONT is a non-profit gallery which exhibits and publishes works by artists and architects. Founded in September of 1982 by Kyong Park and co-directed with Glenn Weiss from March of 1984, STOREFRONT's goals center on providing a space easily accessible for the general public, and the introduction of fundamental issues addressed by art and architecture.

The holistic conception of philosophy measures all independent objects as being interdependent with all other objects. The circle is a holistic image, expandable and contractable. Its centripetal force affirms the dynamic of the world by its constant flux and denial of a reality based upon static substance and selective reality. Its radius captures the eternal existence of time, where our passage through past, present, and future can be conceptualized into an image. Heraclitus seems to have claimed that paradox is at the center of the circle, where the ceaseless mutability of the centripetal force can find a paradoxical balance with the imperishable nature of the circle at its center.

Kyong Park

